

REALIZE GREATER VALUE on your IT investment



Project Highlights

Customer

Canada Post

Challenge

Upgrade key ERP, SRM and CRM infrastructure systems without disrupting internal and customer facing operations

Project Duration

17 months (conception to roll-out).
Cut-over implementation occurred over three days.

Products & Technologies Deployed

SAP NetWeaver Portal 7.0, SAP ERP 6.0, SAP SRM 5.0, SAP CRM 5.0, SAP Learning Solution 6.0

Canada Post Gets SETUP with SAP Upgrade

Innovapost recently helped Canada Post upgrade its entire SAP infrastructure over a three day long weekend – with no impact to end users.

In 1999, Canada Post embarked on one of the largest and most ambitious business transformation projects in Canada. The corporation's Postal Transformation initiative set out to improve customer service and modernize the postal network. A major component of that program was the implementation of an enterprise resource management (ERP) solution from SAP in 2001.

Canada Post has since leveraged SAP solutions to run its core business and mission-critical processes. "SAP is a key component in the running of Canada Post," confirms Aaron Nichols, General Manager, Enterprise Information Management at Canada Post. "We use SAP solutions to run all of our financials, payables, HR and payroll operations so we need to ensure that all back-end SAP functionality is fully supported and up-to-date."

By 2007, it was clear to Canada Post that many of its SAP applications were at end of life. Without system upgrades, Canada Post

would incur extended maintenance costs for its older SAP components and risk running unsupported software. But, with one of the largest SAP footprints in Canada and more than 120,000 business users, Canada Post knew that upgrading a mission-critical infrastructure in such a large, complex environment would be a challenge.

Canada Post would need to perform a number of concurrent upgrades in a short period of time – without disrupting business operations. "SAP is used extensively throughout our network, operations and systems, so an upgrade project like this would touch tens of thousands of custom objects and hundreds of interfaces and connected locations," notes Nichols. "Our challenge was to find an appropriate upgrade time that would match our budget and resource availability without affecting service," Nichols adds.

INNOVAPOST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

About Canada Post

Canada's National Postal Service

Revenues

\$7.7B (2008)

Employees

60,000+

Destinations

The Canada Post Group of companies is responsible for 11 billion pieces of mail each year to 14 million destinations

Locations

6,600 post offices – the largest retail network in Canada

Customers

Serves 32 million Canadians and over 1 million businesses and public institutions from coast to coast to coast

www.canadapost.ca

Getting SETUP

Nichols turned to Innovapost to make it happen. Having helped Canada Post complete seven SAP version upgrades over the previous five years, the Innovapost team was more than familiar with the corporation's SAP installation. Innovapost quickly assembled a SAP Enterprise Technical Upgrade Project (SETUP) and began addressing the challenge.

To tackle the SETUP project, Innovapost brought together a team of 150 people from five organizations, including Innovapost, Canada Post, SAP, CGI and Purolator. Comprising of business stakeholders, IT professionals, and third-party technology partners, the size and makeup of the SETUP team reflected the complex nature of the project.

"Running unsupported software was not an option," explains Nichols. "So we needed to find a way to upgrade all SAP applications simultaneously. Canada Post has had a solid relationship with Innovapost since the SAP infrastructure was first installed, so we had confidence that despite the complexity involved, the project would be well planned and executed."

The SETUP team decided that a long weekend would be an ideal time to execute the massive upgrade. While the team believed that an upgrade could be completed in two days with around-the-clock work, members wanted to have an extra "contingency" day to leave room for unexpected errors. Finding an appropriate holiday weekend, however, proved difficult.

"Canada Post's payroll systems operate on weekends, so we had to find a long weekend that didn't fall at the end of the month or on a pay weekend," Nichols recalls. "In this case, Thanksgiving weekend proved to be the best option."

Laying the Groundwork

The SETUP team identified that more than 5000 business test cases, 400 interfaces and 6000 security roles would need to be tested as part of the upgrade. Through its ties to SAP and CGI, Innovapost gathered the necessary resources and advice and set about developing success criteria and a testing schedule to ensure a smooth cutover.

SETUP Methodology

The project followed the SAP Managed Release Methodology and was divided into two phases:

Discovery Phase – 5 months

- Build project sandbox environment
- Identify key business functions
- Test and identify impact
- Research upgrade content
- Investigate the business cycle impact of deployment

Execution Phase – 12 months

- Build project environments
- Upgrade environments
- Build test cases
- Perform test cycles
- Perform load and performance testing
- Test user acceptance
- Perform 5 mock upgrades

The result was a 2100-line Deployment Plan and a step-by-step “Technical Upgrade Cookbook”. The SETUP team also recommended that Canada Post perform five mock upgrades to serve as dress rehearsals for the real event.

“In addition to running mock upgrades, we held a full three day go-live dress rehearsal for the QA component,” says Nichols. “Afterwards, we held an extensive ‘lessons learned’ session that helped us better prepare for the real thing.”

Going Live

The dress rehearsals and mock upgrades ensured that the SETUP team felt as prepared as possible for the main event. “We were ready, and understood the risks involved,” Nichols recalls. “If we were not able to accomplish everything over the weekend, we would face serious HR and business consequences that following week and beyond. We also knew that we wouldn’t encounter another three-day weekend for a matter of weeks (Easter 2009 was the next available window), so the pressure was on.”

Working around-the-clock shifts and extended hours, members of the SETUP team implemented and tested all of the required upgrades as planned.

“People were on conference calls in the middle of the night,” remembers Nichols. “It was a hectic time, but everyone was aligned to the success criteria agreed to by the SETUP team, so there was little debate about how to proceed or handle issues as they arose.”

Using a “Big Bang” approach, the SETUP team was able to upgrade all integrated systems simultaneously. “With the help of Innovapost and proven SAP methodologies, we were able to do all of our testing all at once,” Nichols explains. “This saved us a great deal of time because we didn’t have to test each component independently.”

In the end, the upgrade was completed two hours ahead of schedule and resulted in absolutely no disruption to Canada Post operations.

SETUP for Success

The SETUP project also achieved its follow-up goal of stable operational status within 21 days of the upgrade. “It was one of the best projects that we’ve done,” notes Nichols. “It’s hard to imagine that it went into production so painlessly, but it speaks to the teamwork and the high calibre of the group at Innovapost.”

SAP Footprint

Home to a large SAP ERP 6.0 application (5 TB database), more than 30,000 custom objects, 120,000+ business users, 650+ connected locations, 500+ interfaces and 30+ third-party applications

Nichols credits the value of the SETUP team's pre-upgrade work for the project's success. "We spent a lot of time planning up front, which paid off. Extensive planning adds costs, but in a project dealing with critical infrastructure it is vital."

These thoughts are echoed by Joanne Desforges, Innovapost Vice President, Canada Post Client Services. "Many individuals put in incredible amounts of time. Literally, every person or team we reached out to for help came through for us."

Desforges was also pleased with the quality of the upgrade services provided by SAP. "We leveraged as many of the SAP safeguarding services as possible and that helped ensure that we had a successful implementation," notes Desforges. "The SAP Max Attention support service helped us reduce our risk and gave us access to skilled resources at every step. In addition to leveraging SAP's go-live and post go-live services, we took advantage of their upgrade and downtime assessments, tech feasibility checks, volume test optimization and business process performance optimization services."

The scale, speed and success of the project was also impressive to SAP. "Canada Post has one of the largest SAP footprints in Canada," says Jason Fox, Vice President of Sales at SAP.

"Upgrading more than 30,000 custom objects and 30 third-party applications at once is a monumental task and this team executed flawlessly."

With the upgrade project complete, Canada Post has moved closer to realizing its strategic Postal Transformation goals. The corporation is now poised to fully address its future technology requirements and offer improved customer service.

"Canada Post is now setup to leverage the benefits of newer SAP technology," notes Desforges. "The upgrade provides a framework to help Canada Post respond more quickly to business needs of both customers and employees. In addition, they will be able to apply functionality-rich enhancement packages and ensure continued back-end compatibility with new operational systems."

The SETUP project was made up of multiple upgrades completed simultaneously, making the potential risks quite real. "It's always good to be able to point to something as a successful project, and that's exactly what we can do in this case," adds Nichols. "The Innovapost team helped us prepare, plan and execute the project and its success has only strengthened our existing partnership."

INNOVAPOST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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Aaron Nichols,
General Manager, Enterprise
Information Management
at Canada Post

SETUP Success Factors

The SETUP team attributes the success of the SAP upgrade to the following factors:

- Assembled an Executive Steering Committee made up of senior executives from across all stakeholder organizations
 - Engaged SAP to provide pre-determined "Safeguarding Services"
 - Brought in SAP Platinum consultants on as-needed basis to help with specific upgrade issues and serve in high-risk areas
 - Held several SAP client reference calls to discuss go-live experiences and leverage lessons learned
 - Utilized the 'HP Quality Center' test tool to create, track and monitor defects for key Canada Post business processes
 - Conducted four separate cycles of testing and executed more than 24,000 test scripts in a dedicated project
- SETUP resulted in an upgrade to ERP 6.0, SRM 5.0, CRM 5.0, LSO (eLearning) 6.0, and EP (Portal) 7.0
 - Implemented an Upgrade Control Committee to enforce brown-out and black-out process/periods
 - Leveraged 'HP LoadRunner' software for performance/load testing on the key business process areas
 - Brought in an independent auditor to perform quality audits throughout the life cycle of the project to ensure completeness of deliverables and adherence to the work plan

For general inquiries: info@innovapost.com

Head Office

365 March Road
Ottawa, Ontario
K2K 3N5
t 613-270-6262
f 613-270-6525

www.innovapost.com

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